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**November 2011**

**Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge**  
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**Irrigon, OR 97844**  
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<http://www.fws.gov/umatilla>

**c/o Mid-Columbia River**  
**National Wildlife Refuge Complex**  
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**Burbank, WA 99323**  
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**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

# **Umatilla**

## *National Wildlife Refuge*

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental disability. For more information please contact the U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

*Wood duck hen*  
©Rinusbaak



*An oasis for wildlife in the Columbia Basin, Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge protects a wide range of habitat types providing food, water, cover and space for a tremendous diversity of wildlife.*



## Welcome

The 23,555-acre Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge is one of more than 550 refuges throughout the United States administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Established in 1969 as mitigation for habitat lost through flooding from the construction of the John Day Dam on the Columbia River, Umatilla Refuge is a mecca for birdwatchers and wildlife enthusiasts.



The refuge is a mix of open water, slough, shallow marsh, riparian woodland, seasonal wetland, cropland, island and shrub-steppe upland habitats. It is divided into five units—two in Oregon and three in Washington. The scarcity of wetlands and other natural habitats in this area makes Umatilla Refuge vital to migrating waterfowl, bald eagles, colonial nesting birds and other migratory and resident wildlife.

National Wildlife Refuges comprise some of the finest natural resources in public ownership. The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to preserve a national network of lands and waters for the conservation and management of fish, wildlife and plant resources of the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.





## A Year of Wildlife

**Long-billed curlew**



© Jane Abel

**Burrowing owl**



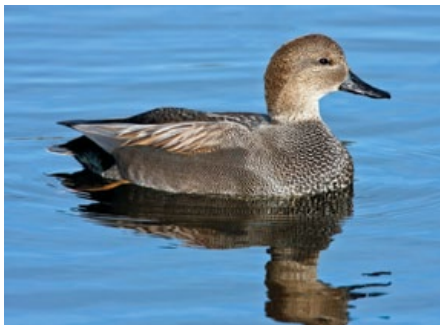
© Margaret Matthewson

**Mule deer**



© Chuck and Grace Bartlett

**Male gadwall duck**



© Chuck and Grace Bartlett

## A Year of Wildlife

### Spring

Spring is the time to see extravagant wildflower displays on the refuge. Many species of waterfowl, shorebirds and songbirds stop to rest and refuel on their long northern migrations. Long-billed curlews arrive in late March to begin their spectacular courtship flights.

### Summer

As the flurry of migration subsides, remaining wildlife begin raising their young. Look for broods of Canada geese, mallards and cinnamon teal in refuge wetlands. Avocets and black-necked stilts probe the mudflats for food, and American white pelicans soar high above the Columbia River. At dusk, watch for short-eared and burrowing owls hunting for rodents along field edges. Mule deer does and fawns feed in uplands and agricultural fields.

### Fall

In early fall songbirds migrate back through the area enroute to Mexico and Central America. Duck and goose numbers begin to build as days get shorter and colder on breeding grounds to the north. Take an evening drive along the McCormack Unit Auto Tour Route to see one of the area's greatest attractions—the large mule deer herd that resides on the refuge's McCormack Unit.

### Winter

The refuge is a wintering area for many species of waterfowl, raptors and songbirds. Peak concentrations of waterfowl usually occur in November and December. Winter also brings bald eagles and tundra swans. If freezing temperatures are not too severe and grain remains in agricultural fields, many birds will stay in the area all winter long.

## Refuge Habitats

Umatilla Refuge is intensively managed to provide habitat for migratory birds and resident wildlife. Management practices include restoration of wetlands, manipulation of seasonal wetlands to encourage the production of wildlife foods, farming, prescribed burning, planting native willows and cottonwoods in riparian areas, improving uplands through the removal of exotic weed species and planting native grasses.

Approximately 1,400 acres of refuge lands are irrigated croplands which provide food and cover for wildlife. Local farmers grow corn, wheat and other crops under cooperative agreements whereby the refuge's share of the crops is left in the field for wildlife.



*American kestrel*  
© Chuck and Grace Bartlett

*Canada geese in cornfield*



© Chuck and Grace Bartlett



## Refuge Habitats

### Whitcomb Unit



### McCormack Unit



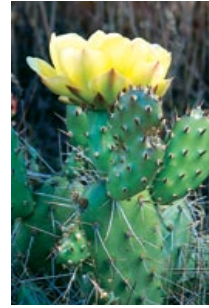
### Ridge Unit



### Paterson Unit



## Refuge Habitats



*Prickly-pear  
cactus*

The building of dams on the Columbia River began in the 1930s, changing it from a narrow, fast-flowing river to a wide, slow-moving reservoir. In some places, the river's depth was raised 25 feet. Many islands, riparian areas and other habitats were flooded, but other previously arid lands were transformed into wetlands. Native cottonwoods, willows, cattails and bulrush soon began to appear in environments that were previously desert. McCormack Slough in Oregon and Paterson Slough in Washington are good examples of wetlands created by rising Columbia River water levels.

At higher elevations above the Columbia River's reach, the refuge's plant communities are dominated by species capable of tolerating the hot, dry conditions of the Columbia Plateau. Common shrubs include sagebrush, bitterbrush and rabbitbrush. Native bunchgrasses such as basin wildrye, Indian ricegrass, Idaho fescue and Sandberg bluegrass were once common here, but today they must compete with successful exotic plants such as cheatgrass, knapweeds, tumbleweed and perennial pepperweed. Refuge managers are working to remove invasive, noxious weeds, and replant refuge habitats with native species beneficial to wildlife.

Islands in the Columbia River portion of Umatilla Refuge are an important sanctuary for birds year-round and are closed to public entry. Ducks, Canada geese, great blue herons and black-crowned night herons nest here in spring and summer. Thousands of ducks and geese winter on the islands, and many different species rest here during spring and fall migrations.

## Wildlife Viewing

**Yellow-headed  
blackbird**



© Chuck and Grace Bartlett

**American white  
pelican**



© Jane Abel

**Black-necked  
stilt**



© Chuck and Grace Bartlett

**Woodhouse toad**



© Chuck and Grace Bartlett

## Wildlife Viewing

**American avocet**



© Chuck and Grace Bartlett

**California quail**



© Chuck and Grace Bartlett

**Bewick's wren**



© Jerry Nichols

**Black-tailed  
jackrabbit**



© Holland Banks



## Wildlife Viewing Tips



© Jerry Nichols

*Redhead  
duck pair*

Watching wildlife can be an exciting and rewarding experience. Increase your chances of observing animals by following these suggestions:

Visit the refuge early in the morning or just before sunset. Animals are usually more active then, especially during the warmer times of year, and can often be observed coming and going to feeding and resting areas.

Watch for wildlife in areas where two habitat types meet. Animals are attracted to the variety of food and shelter found in these transition zones.

Stay in your car. Your vehicle is an excellent observation and photographic blind. Animals have grown accustomed to seeing people in cars and are less threatened than by people on foot.

Use binoculars and spotting scopes to get a closer look without leaving your car. The next visitor will appreciate your not scaring the animal into hiding. In addition, wildlife will benefit by not having to expend precious energy in escaping.

Choose the right season for viewing the wildlife you wish to observe. Curlews are more visible in spring when they are doing their courtship flights. Mule deer bucks are more active during the fall rut. Large concentrations of waterfowl are common in November and December.

Study and learn more about wildlife. Many good bird books and field guides are available to assist you in determining what species are common to the area you are visiting.



*Great blue heron*  
© Chuck and Grace Bartlett

## Recreational Activities

### Auto Tour Route



The McCormack Unit Auto Tour Route highlights refuge management activities and provides opportunities for viewing both wildlife and habitat types.

### Columbia Heritage Trail



A hiking trail crossing several jurisdictions runs through the refuge for 5.3 miles, coinciding with the McCormack Unit Auto Tour Route for part of its distance. The trail is open from February 1 through October 1.

### Bicycling and Horseback Riding



Bicycling and horseback riding are permitted only on the Columbia River Heritage Trail and on roads that are open to motorized vehicles; access is prohibited on trails and roads closed to vehicles.

### Hiking



Hiking is allowed along roads open to vehicle traffic and in designated hiking areas.

### Fishing



Fishing is allowed on most of the Columbia River portions of the refuge. The Quarry Ponds off the McCormack Unit Auto Tour Route are open during state seasons.

### Boating



Boating is allowed on the Columbia River and backwaters. Boating is not allowed on McCormack Slough.

### Hunting



Hunting is allowed on portions of the refuge, with restrictions. See the Umatilla Hunting brochure for details on species, locations, hunt days and other special regulations.

### Observation and Photography



Wildlife observation and photography are encouraged. Please contact the refuge for information on using select hunting blinds for photography and wildlife observation. Please stay out of closed areas to minimize disturbance to wildlife.

## Recreational Activities

### Regulations

#### Visiting Hours

The refuge is open from sunrise to sunset.



© Chuck and Grace Bartlett

#### Parking and Access

Please access the refuge from designated access roads and park only in designated parking areas. No overnight parking is allowed on the refuge.

#### Disabled Visitors

Access varies by area. Contact refuge staff for suggestions on safe access and use.

#### Weapons

Individuals may possess, carry and transport firearms on the refuge in accordance with all provisions of state and local law. Persons may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with refuge regulations (50 CFR 27.42 and specific refuge regulations in 50 CFR Part 32). Target shooting and sighting-in of weapons are not permitted.

#### Prohibited Activities

Dogs off leash, fires, camping, off-road driving, ATVs and collecting plants, animals, minerals, antlers and artifacts are prohibited.



## Accommodations

### Gasoline, Food, Water and Restrooms

Most areas of the refuge are remote with no restroom facilities. No public drinking water is available on the refuge.

Gasoline, supermarkets and restaurants are located in Boardman, Irrigon, Umatilla and Hermiston, Oregon.

Limited food is available in Paterson and Plymouth, Washington.

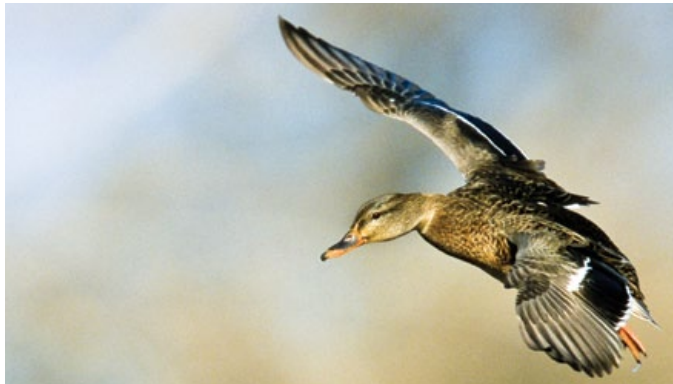
### Camping

Camping is not permitted on the refuge. Camping facilities in Oregon are available at the Boardman Marina and at Hat Rock State Park east of Umatilla. Camping facilities are available at Crow Butte State Park in Washington.

### Lodging

Lodging is available in Boardman, Umatilla and Hermiston, Oregon.

*Female mallard duck*



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## Refuge Signs

### What They Mean



This sign delineates the refuge boundary. You may enter the area only on designated access routes.



This sign is used to designate public access routes through the refuge. You are welcome to drive, bicycle, horseback ride, or walk these roads.



**This area is closed to ALL entry.** No hunting or access is permitted; all roads and trails are closed to the public.



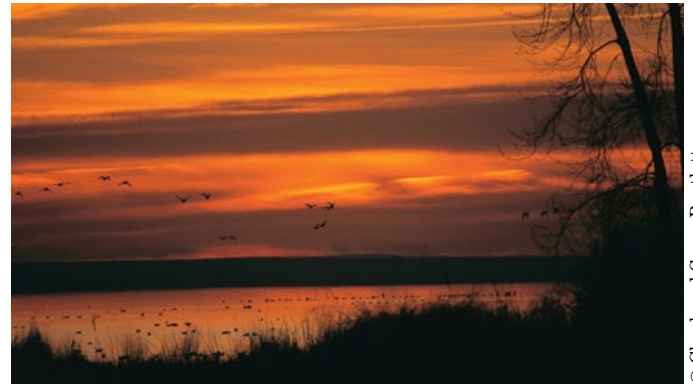
**No hunting permitted.** You may pass through this area to get to hunting units. You may retrieve downed birds.



All visitors are required to park in designated parking areas.

Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge is part of the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex. For more information about nearby wildlife refuges, call 509/546-8300.

*Umatilla sunset*



© Chuck and Grace Bartlett

# Umatilla

## National Wildlife Refuge

